Wallula-Smiths Harbor

500-kV Transmission Line Project

Bonneville Power Administration and Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council are committed to providing reliable power to the Northwest region and the state of Washington. Over the next five years, new infrastructure projects will be designed and constructed to improve the reliability of existing power structures and to meet future power needs.

Project Description

This Wallula-Smiths Harbor proposed 500-kilovolt (kV) transmission line is about 33-miles long and would integrate power from a 1,300-megawatt natural gas-fired combined-cycle combustion gas turbine facility (the Wallula Power Project) in Walla Walla County, Wash. The purpose of the proposed power project is to provide low cost energy to meet the growing needs of the Northwest and other interconnected areas where electric energy is needed. Wallula Generation, LLC would construct and operate the generation plant and associated facilities, including the water supply line. BPA would design, construct and operate the two 500-kV transmission line segments and switchyard. To supply natural gas to the plant site, a 5.9-mile pipeline interconnection would be engineered, constructed, owned and operated by PG&E Gas Transmission-Northwest (GTN).

Distribution of the power generated by the Wallula Power Project would require construction of a new five-mile 500-kV transmission line and construction of a new switchyard at Smiths Harbor, near Wallula Junction. For firm electric power transfer, an additional line from Smiths Harbor Switchyard to the existing McNary substation, (28 miles long) and upgrades to the existing McNary substation would need to be constructed. The new 28-mile transmission line would be built adjacent to existing transmission lines.

Working with the Community

The transmission line project proposes to cross the McNary Wildlife Area adjacent to an existing transmission line near the mouth of the Walla Walla River. This area receives heavy bird use during the winter months and is important for local recreation. The proposed line would also span wetlands in the Wanaket Wildlife Area and pass near agricultural properties and recreation areas. Construction and maintenance of the proposed transmission line would require the construction of several new access roads, predominantly on relatively flat ground. The cumulative effect of the gas combustion turbine emissions of the Wallula Power Plant, when combined with 14 other power plants proposed for construction and energization by 2004, may decrease visibility for three days in winter in the Mt. Hood Wilderness Area and Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area.

BPA is looking for ways to avoid impacts to birds through careful design and placement of towers and lines, and placing bird diverters on portions of the overhead ground wire where there may be potential bird problems. BPA will avoid placing roads and structures in wetland and recreation areas. Gas turbine emissions will be monitored by state and federal air regulation agencies and air pollutant emissions would be within acceptable limits defined by state and federal standards. BPA is committed to working with public agencies, interest groups, tribal communities and private property owners to minimize design and construction impacts.

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Environmental Planning

As BPA designs this project, special efforts will be made to minimize disruption to people, habitat and farm production. Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) are developed for each project to evaluate alignment alternatives and mitigation issues. The EIS focuses on protecting, restoring and enhancing the natural environment and getting public input on project alternatives. For this project, BPA is co-lead on the joint State Environmental Protection Act/National Environmental Policy Act Environmental Impact Statement with the Washington Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC). EFSEC has responsibility for evaluating the power plant. Some of the key project milestones include:

- **Scoping.** BPA identified possible issues and concerns on the project by conducting public meetings and meeting with state and federal agencies and concerned tribes in Spring 2001.
- **Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).** The draft EIS describes the existing environment and how it may be affected. The environmental resources analyzed include cultural resources, fish and wildlife, land use and visual resources. The draft EIS also recommends ways to reduce adverse effects. The draft EIS was available for public review and comment through April 11, 2002 and can be accessed using the web address listed below. BPA held public meetings on the draft EIS March 13 and 14, 2002.
- **Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).** The final EIS will respond to all public comments on the draft EIS and modify the document, as necessary. The final EIS will be available to the public in summer 2002.

Based on the environmental studies, additional technical analysis, public input and the Washington governor's decision on whether to approve the construction of the new power plant, BPA's administrator will decide how to proceed on the project. If BPA decides to construct a new 500-kV transmission line, the expected operation date is fall 2004.

Funding and Schedule

BPA and private power plant developers would fund the project. The developers are paying for the environmental review. The detailed design for the transmission line portion of the project is 60 percent complete while the detailed design for the switchyard is about 10 percent complete. Construction is anticipated to start in 2002 for the switchyard and 2003 for the transmission line. The five-mile transmission line from the proposed generation plant to the interconnection point on the Lower Monumental - McNary 500-kV line and the proposed Smiths Harbor Switchyard are scheduled to be completed in early 2004 (February), while the 28-mile transmission line from Smiths Harbor to the McNary Substation is scheduled to be completed late 2004.

Questions or Comments

For questions regarding engineering or issues related to this project, you may call the Project Manager Lou Dreissen toll free at 1-888-276-7790. You may access the draft EIS and find more information about the project and the responsible agencies on the BPA Web site at **www.transmission.bpa.gov/projects**, select Infrastructure and scroll down to the Wallula-Smith Harbor Project. If you have real estate or easement questions or would like a representative from BPA to meet with you on site, please call Michelle Doiron at (509) 527-6266. Information is also available on the EFSEC web site at www.efsec.wa.gov.

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